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DECEMBER 2020 | VOLUME 11 | ISSUE 12

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GROUND COVER

NEWS AND SOLUTIONS FROM THE GROUND UP | WASHTENAW COUNTY, MICH.

Who can get to
the polls? **Page 2**



Trump supporters outside Detroit TCF Center claim voter fraud. Photo credit: Sarah Cwiek, Michigan Radio.

Who can get to the polls?

From the start of our country, voting has been an essential tool of democracy. The ability to choose our representation, the candidates who will fight for the needs and wants of our communities, is an intrinsic part of being civically engaged in the United States as well as other democratically oriented nations.

While this right has been consistently provided to a few here in the United States, there are a great many actively denied their participation. Since the nation's inception, groups such as Black Americans, women, the current or previously incarcerated and other minorities have had to fight for their place at the polling stations.

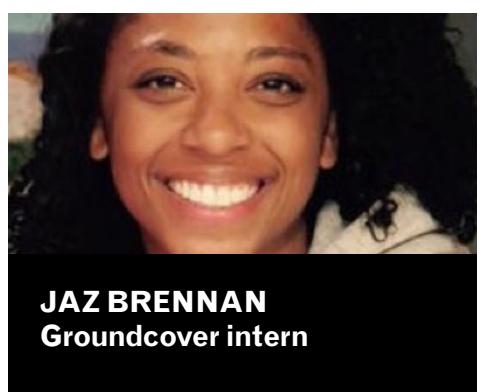
Throughout our history, as the right to vote was won by these groups, new and improved ways to stop their voices have been implemented. We call this voter suppression. It can take multiple forms such as legal restrictions that impede access or intimidation tactics, aggression and violence.

In 2020, a year built on turmoil, it should be no surprise that our society is beginning to shine a light on the inequities built throughout our institutions. With a deeply divided presidential election this year, voter suppression reared its ugly face once more.

In Michigan, there is a longstanding ban against transporting folks to the polls on Election day. A state law passed in 1895 made it a misdemeanor crime to hire transportation for voters without transportation unless they were physically unable to walk. Historically, this law was passed to limit or at least lessen a type of voter fraud called vote-hauling, which looks something like:

"I'll give you a ride if you vote for my candidate."

Today, many organizations throughout the state supply transportation to the polls to give their clients, who may otherwise have limited access, the opportunity to vote. Due to a federal court upholding the state law on



JAZ BRENNAN
Groundcover intern

October 22, 2020, any of these organizations who pay for the rides must stop the transport or be at risk of penalty, which can range from 90 days in jail to a \$500 fine. They are also prohibited from spending money to advertise rides provided by unpaid volunteers.

"It is extremely disappointing to see a federal court actively disenfranchise Americans and we are exploring next steps to determine what would be best for the voters in Michigan," said Guy Cecil, chairman for Priorities USA.

Disappointing indeed, but many groups were able to secure volunteers. The law does not say anything about free rides, so transportation companies can offer vehicles and drivers as long as it is done on a charitable basis and there is no reimbursement for time or gas.

In Ann Arbor, the Shelter Association of Washtenaw County was able to coordinate with Estella Express who provided 100% free transportation for those at the shelter to the polls. Estella is normally hired to take people to and from the airport, but donated her time and vehicle for the day to support the cause.

Loopholes are possible, but should they be necessary?

Getting people out to vote is difficult enough. However, voters experience more disincentive upon arrival. Registering to vote can occur up until 3 p.m. on the day of the election at the City Clerk's Office. A form of ID and proof of residency is required. This could be a piece of mail that reflects the address on the identification, something that is

often taken for granted by those who are consistently housed. For individuals experiencing homelessness, this can be an immediate and insurmountable barrier. Addresses on forms of ID are not always current or local to where the individual is hoping to vote.

Transportation to their polling places could be impossible to secure, and so many choose to change their registration residency. To do so, that piece of mail is imperative but not always available, leaving some individuals turned away — voiceless.

These are policy and procedural barriers, but what happens when access is restricted by people?

For months we have been seeing the political divide deepen in the United States. This particular election has ignited anger and, unfortunately, danger throughout the populace.

Prior to the election, Michigan's Secretary of State, Jocelyn Benson, attempted to ban open-carry of guns to the polls. The attempt was thwarted by the Michigan Court of Claims who ruled the law illegal since it did not go through the proper process. After an appeal was made, the decision remained firm. Guns could enter the voting arena.

One might inquire as to the necessity for armed weapons in a democratic proceeding such as choosing our next president. It seems there are two potential reasons: protection or intimidation. If for protection, the question is – from whom? If for intimidation, the question changes to – are we willing to allow this?

Appeals are currently in place to challenge Michigan's transportation ban as well as the open-carry policy at the state and federal level. While change will come too late for this election, let us come together to decide what we want to see in the next. Old laws can be replaced with new ones. Always remember, the people are the power; our voices today are the reality of tomorrow!

Gratefully yours

In these trying and difficult times, Groundcover News so appreciates your support of those who sell the paper and the organization itself. We have been touched by the donations – many of them repeated at regular intervals – that reduce the financial stresses that accompany the pandemic.

We are equally grateful to those who take the time to write and proofread the content of each issue and to those who not only read the articles but take the time to discuss them and other topics with our vendors. Many of our vendors shared with us how lonely and isolated they felt during those lockdown months when they couldn't sell Groundcover and chat with you.

We cannot thank enough all the people who helped around our "office" this year. (Because of the pandemic, our host church has remained closed and we conduct all our business and support services in the parking lot.) A whole host of college students and young adults from the neighborhood, U-M and St. Mary's Student Parish helped our few persistent older volunteers bag and deliver groceries, assist vendors in meeting stimulus payment and unemployment criteria, set up phones, and sell newspapers to our vendors when they could finally go back to work.

We are a community, and we thank you for being such an important part of it. We are wishing you all a healthy and happy holiday season filled with gratitude and hope, and for us all, a much better New Year!

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GROUNDCOVER

Mission

Creating opportunity and a voice for low-income people while taking action to end homelessness and poverty.

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Turn poison into medicine



KEVIN SPANGLER
Groundcover vendor No. 307

Coming into the winter months I am chanting a Buddhist chant Nam-myoho-renge-kyo one to two hours a day. This mantra means devotion to the mystic law through cause and effect and through sound and vibration. What this means to me is that the energy you put into the universe is the energy you get back, and you can not lie to the universe.

What you focus on is what you get through times of turmoil. It is imperative that we focus on our goals to create a positive reality. Every day, live in the present and chant for a positive future. Always focus on what you can do to turn your situation into a positive, turning poison into medicine.



The new Treehouse 603 lightbox advertising trailer as often seen driving around downtown Ann Arbor.

Finding good in hard times

DENISE SHEARER
Groundcover vendor No. 490

imagining things I like to see happening. I like to see peace in the world happening.

I like to think of how my friends and I are sharing time and are happy together. And I like me and my family and friends sharing smiles and kindness even though times are hard.

I find joy in loving and talking to God and thinking about how good God is. I find joy in praying for myself and others.

Writing brings me joy. Writing more articles keeps me having more joy for the future.

Cranbrook cares and keeps us seniors safe



PAULA ANDERSON
Groundcover vendor No. 157

The Cranbrook Senior Tower Apartments staff has shown so much how caring you are. Lyndsey, Taimi and Devin were some of those people who made Cranbrook a safe environment. Some of us had

to learn the hard way — like me — but you all guided me the right way. You all even keep us safe from the virus and more. This is the first place where management and office people show you care — Thank you!

GROUNDCOVER NEWS ADVERTISING RATES

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1/2	\$299.95	\$399.95	10.25 x 6.5 or 5 x 13
Full Page	\$495.95	\$669.95	10.25 x 13

Three Months/Three Issues: 15% off

Six Months/Six Issues: 25% off

Full Year/Twelve Issues: 35% off

Additional 20% off ads with coupons

Who is helping Washtenaw County's homeless community amidst COVID-19 pandemic?

"The true measure of a person is not where she/he stands in times of comfort and convenience, but where she/he stands in times of challenge and controversy."

— Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

Atlantic Monthly Science Writer Ed Young was prophetic in his March 25, 2020 article titled, "How the Pandemic Will End." He said, "Three months ago, no one knew that SARS-CoV-2 existed. Now the virus has spread to almost every country, infecting at least 446,000 people whom we know about, and many more whom we do not. It has crashed economies and broken health-care systems, filled hospitals and emptied public spaces. It has separated people from their workplaces and their friends. It has disrupted modern society on a scale that most living people have never witnessed. Soon, most people in the United States will know someone who has been infected." He also said, "The U.S. may end up with the worst COVID-19 outbreak in the industrialized world."

Pastor Vicky is well-known for working with other faith-based organizations such as the Ann Arbor Christian Reformed Church for partnership in securing meals, snacks, and other resources for the homeless. Brennan also mentioned that AACRC provided their space and resources to continue the placement of the men in the Rotating Shelter Program through the Shelter Association. "The Ann Arbor Christian Reformed Church allowed us to shelter-in-place, providing day and night shelter as well as coordinating meals, clothing donations, and more."

Other organizations that stepped up to help vulnerable people meet their nutritional needs during this year's COVID-19 pandemic include: The Front Yard Food Pantries of Ypsilanti and Ann Arbor; the Hope Clinic, the Neutral Zone of Ann Arbor's food and supply programs for youth in need; The LIVE community organization which solicits donations in Ypsilanti and Ann Arbor for pick-up meal distribution, and the Mercy House of Ann Arbor.

Under the leadership of Peggy Lynch, Mercy House was able to prepare meals and served over 200 homeless and recently housed poor people in Ann Arbor every Saturday during the months of March, April and May 2020.

As for The Shelter Association, Brennan said "[they] did a good job of ultimately coordinating the COVID-19 emergency."

In March, two shelter clients at the Delonis Center tested positive for the coronavirus. The staff and the leadership were very concerned about an impending community spread. They contracted additional facilities which allowed for adequate physical distancing. Brennan, a Social Work Operation Specialist at the shelter observed,

According to Social Worker Jaz Brennan, "The faith community really stepped up to assist the Shelter



WILL SHAKESPEARE
Groundcover vendor No. 258



Eileen Spring, Executive Director of Food Gatherers, spearheaded a response to the increased need for food brought on by the pandemic and the concurrent closure of food pantries staffed by seniors.



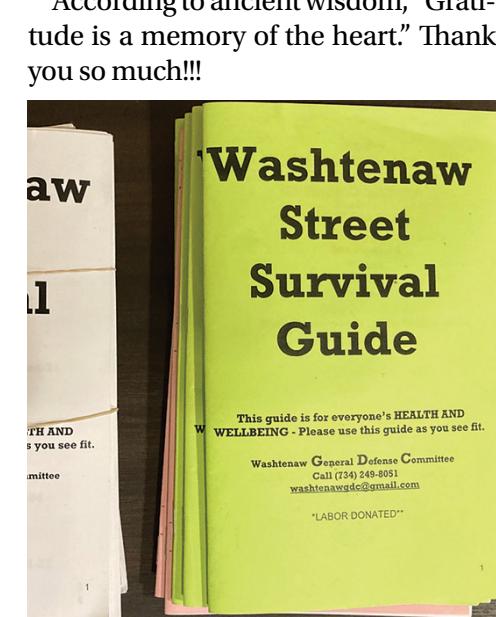
Dan Kelley, Executive Director of the Shelter Association of Washtenaw County, spent endless hours seeking out and preparing additional shelter sites to allow for physical distancing of guests.

"While there were hiccups throughout the process, people stepped up to serve their community in a really positive way." She continued, "The hotel was the best choice to have been made, and the work of Sarah Kruszka, C. J. McLaughlin and many others was what true social work is all about."

During the toughest days of the pandemic, Shelter Association Executive Director Dan Kelly reached out to local news organizations and asked to spread the word that his organization was looking for help "to identify locations that can provide safe winter sheltering with social distancing, as well as additional financial support for expanded operations."

Washtenaw Camp Outreach was created by Community Activists Greg Pratt and Tony Scott during the early months of the pandemic. Co-founder Greg Pratt said, "We have been talking about how to support people camping after their end-dates at the shelters; some were getting hotel rooms, but all that time, only those at high-risk and/or exposed and needing to isolate."

A Ghandi quote that is a favorite of Dr. King is, "The best way to find who you are is to lose yourselves in the service of others."



Street Survival Guides, organized by members of Washtenaw Defense Committee, are resource books that contain information on where to access food, laundry, showers and other essentials.

Thanksgiving was just a few days ago

Michigan Ability Partners – new look reflects expanded services

REBECCA YACIUK
Groundcover contributor



Michigan Ability Partners has been around for over 35 years, starting as Washtenaw Interventions, providing vocational services for individuals with disabilities. Since 1985, MAP has evolved into a 35-person agency with seven housing locations in Washtenaw County and two offices in Ann Arbor and Jackson. MAP provides comprehensive services to veterans and those who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless — 1,500 individuals receive financial management, vocational services, transitional housing, rapid rehousing or permanent housing, all allowing the individual to gain self-sufficiency.

Recently, a coalition of Michigan funders came together to provide area nonprofits access to Catchafire. Projects can range from marketing to annual reports to business plans. Volunteers from all over the world offer their expertise pro bono.

MAP took advantage of this resource after being offered a membership from Ann Arbor Area Community Foundation.

Through Catchafire, a resource where nonprofits can match with volunteers for capacity building projects, the agency was matched with Jackie Monaco, of Hey Jack, based in California. MAP started an enriching process to establish a new logo. Branding, especially for non-profits, needs to be inviting, non-offensive, and provide a quick story of the services offered. The smallest details separate good logos from great ones.

"It was understood by the staff and board of directors that a new logo was desperately needed. Our previous logo represented who we were when we created it. In the 22 years since, MAP has evolved to represent so much more. As an agency based in Washtenaw County, we knew we had to make sure that MAP stood out," shared Jan Little, MAP's CEO for almost 10 years.

Michigan Ability Partners is starting off its new fiscal year with a new look, ready to tell the community its stories. To learn more about Michigan Ability Partners, you can visit its website at www.mapagency.org.



MAP helped me change my life, then I helped MAP

RANDALL BATH, FORMER CLIENT & BOARD MEMBER
Groundcover contributor

After I got to know everyone at MAP, and they got to know me, I was asked if I would consider becoming a client representative on the Board of Directors. I jumped at the chance. I thought I had the skills to become a good Board member and determined to bring them to bear. I thought from the start that the way to approach it was to be actively involved.

This meant asking questions when something was said that I didn't understand, and helping to make informed decisions about Board actions. My relationships with MAP staff were the key to this; I felt comfortable talking with staff personnel to find out more when I needed to. I discovered that being a Board member was important to me, for I felt (and still feel) that I owe MAP more than I could ever repay. Being a good Board member was a way to repay a little of what had so freely been given to me.

Some of those clients who were with MAP when I started are among my best friends. The staff has always been wonderful to me, even on those occasions when I am sure I was being a pain in the neck. I will always think of MAP with a lot of gratitude. Not just for the things they have done for me, but also for the opportunity to meet and learn from so many great people — both staff and clients.

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My homelessness episode

In January of 2019, I drank to intoxication after nearly 20 years of sobriety (minus one night in 2013). The reasons for the relapse are not pertinent. Suffice it to say this was where the story of my homelessness episode began:

My career had taken a downturn, and for reasons my wife at the time and I weren't aware of, our marriage was failing. When she learned of my relapse, I fled. Due to being relapsed, many of my friends closed their doors to me, rightfully so. One friend offered a place to stay for a night, but on my way to his house, my car was totaled. Since his offer was only good for the night, I made arrangements to stay at the Delonis Center. This was February of 2020. The Center had a waiting list for residency, but I was still able to sleep there at night since it was winter.

My drinking became daily. Members of Alcoholics Anonymous approached me often. At one point I had put together thirty sober days but



JIM CLARK
Groundcover vendor No. 139

the pain I was trying to anesthetize was too much. I would find myself drinking to blackout and waking up on the floor of the homeless shelter. Sometimes I would wake up in a tent in the park — injured, divested of property and having put myself in danger the night before. This went on for eight months. During that time, my divorce was finalized. My ex-wife took everything; the house and all my personal property were gone. I was ruined.

Homelessness is episodic. After a few nights at the shelter, I thought about a friend whose house burnt down. Had it not been for insurance and a carefully planned nest egg, he and his family might have become homeless as well. Homelessness can strike anyone, anytime, anywhere. My friend has a relatively secure, comfortable income, but many of the people I have met suffered disasters without a fallback plan. The time in which someone becomes homeless varies from person to person, but many of the people I met came to the shelter within the same week.

I met a few people who had come from situations similar to mine. Intelligent men who made a grave mistake that cost them everything. We bonded and became a cohort. I learned from them how to behave on the street, in the shelter, at the soup kitchens and warming centers. We put our cots together in the shelter, ate at the breakfast church and spent time helping

each other navigate county services. The camaraderie we experienced was similar to the combat experiences of veterans. They were my "road dogs."

There are many cohorts that stick together, even after they are housed. This entire network — Washtenaw County, Good Samaritans (whom I lovingly refer to as "hobo helpers"), social workers, and the survivors of homelessness themselves, created an extended family. This family loved me while I healed and regrouped.

The next step for me is to make amends to the City of Ann Arbor and Ypsilanti for terrorizing them with my drunken behavior and severe lack of judgment. I am an intelligent, educated man with a lot to offer. Hopefully, the teaching degree I earned at Eastern Michigan will be able to help. I'm ready to give back. For saving my life, I will be ever grateful to "The Community" of Washtenaw County.

Homelessness is episodic. After a

Magnus the Entertainer motivates Brandon and others

Brandon Williams had a rough start in life. He entered the foster care system in 1991, never having the chance to know his mother. His father tried to get custody of him when Brandon was put in foster care but was never successful.

In an unlikely turn of events, Williams studied ballet at Western Michigan University and developed his extroverted alter ego, Magnus the Entertainer. In February 2020 Magnus went to Los Angeles for the first round of America's Got Talent.

To get there, Williams stayed in Ann Arbor at the Delonis Warming Shelter in December and January, eventually becoming part of the Rotating Shelter program, saving money to make the trip to Los Angeles. He credits the staff and fellow residents at Delonis with imbuing his life with purpose.

Williams came to dance late in life. Upset at what was going on in his foster home, he had failed a class in high school. The two classes available to him to make up that class were drama and dance. He chose dance and ended up loving ballet. Unfortunately, he couldn't afford dance lessons.

He aged out of Western Wayne foster care in 2009 and was placed in an independent living program for foster children to prepare him for life on his own. Instead of teaching him to do laundry, handle money and cook, his caseworker inappropriately



SUSAN BECKETT
Publisher

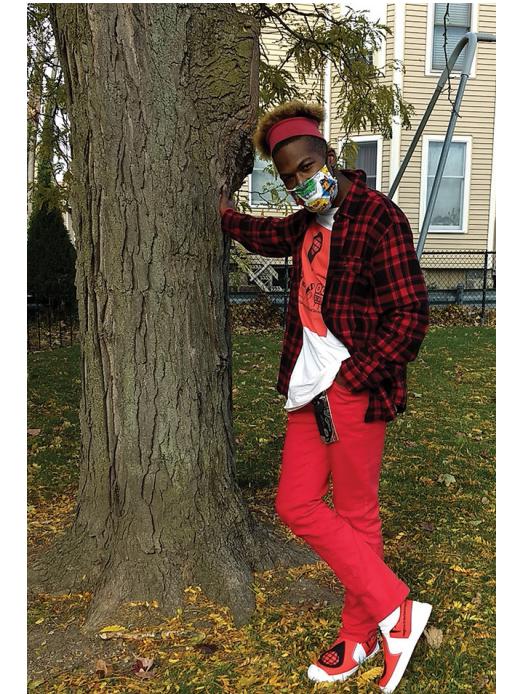
took him into her home and did all those things for him.

Eventually he got back on track in 2018 and took advantage of scholarships for foster children and enrolled at Western Michigan's dance program. "A loss is really a gain if you know where you want to go," said Williams. "Pain is your friend; pain is your fuel."

He had lost two friends to violence and decided he needed to leave, which took him to Western Michigan University.

"There was a time when violence kept me safe, fed and protected. Game was all I knew, until I found ballet," said Williams. "A lot of folks in hip-hop look to WMU. I have a mean hip-hop."

He took dance more seriously at college so he could deliver the message, "It doesn't matter where you come from or how you were raised ... Tragedy can be inspiring."



Brandon Williams, aka Magnus the Entertainer, is wearing the t-shirt, pants and shoes he designed for aspiring artists.

was depressed when I first got here, until James Jakes saw me in an emotional breakdown and said, 'Don't ever stop dancing. See a therapist or whatever you have to do.' The people at the Delonis Center help me."

Williams is especially grateful for the mentoring he received from Delonis staff members Miss Jaz, Richard Bartha and Alexa Bartha (his

see BRANDON page 11 ➤

Anti-Trump in name only: U-M regent's other ties

SAMUEL SUSSMAN
Groundcover contributor

Going into the 2016 presidential election, Ron Weiser was a proud member of the Republican Party's fiscal conservative wing. Weiser was among Michigan's wealthiest Republican political donors. He had hundreds of millions of dollars from McKinley, the Ann Arbor investment firm he founded after graduating from the University of Michigan and had donated much of that wealth to state and national Republican candidates.

Weiser's prolific donations and fundraising during George W. Bush's first presidential campaign had earned him the position of the campaign's Michigan Finance Chair. After the election, Bush named Weiser the U.S. Ambassador to Slovakia. Weiser served in this position from 2001 to 2005.

When it came time for the 2008 presidential campaign, Weiser was named a National Co-Chair of John McCain's campaign. After McCain lost the election, Weiser was elected to his first term as Chairman of the Michigan Republican Party.

Besides political donations, Weiser and his wife are both among Michigan's biggest philanthropists. They have donated to numerous local and national not-for-profit organizations. Weiser and his wife are also both alumni of the University of Michigan — over their lifetime, they have both donated approximately \$144.5 million to the University.

In 2008, as part of one of his donations to the University, Weiser established the Weiser Center for Emerging Democracies. As he explained in a press release about his second donation to the Center in 2014, "studying countries that have made the successful transition to democracy gives us an opportunity to help nations that are in the process of transitioning."

An audience member asked how Weiser could support Trump given the "things [Trump has] said or the things we know he did." Weiser took great pains to distance his belief in "economic conservatism" from "Trumpism," something he defined as "nationalism, anti-globalism,

Given his commitment to democratic institutions and economic conservatism, Weiser took pains to distance himself from Donald Trump's brand of anti-immigrant xenophobia and barely-veiled bigotry as it slowly overtook the Republican Party during the 2016 primary.

FEC filings from the time show that Weiser and his wife doled out \$5,400 donations — the maximum allowed under federal campaign laws — to the presidential campaigns of Jeb Bush, Ted Cruz and Marco Rubio as they each sought to overtake Trump for the Party's nomination. (In a phone call earlier this week, Weiser explained his support for Bush by stating that Jeb Bush had been his "friend" since George W. Bush's presidency.)

However, once Trump became the nominee in 2016, Weiser switched course. He began donating large sums of money to Trump-associated campaign funds. FEC filings show that Weiser donated a little over \$150,000 in three separate installments to the Trump Victory fund.

It was against this backdrop that Weiser appeared as part of the Ford School of Public Policy's 2016 post-election panel discussion. To begin the event, Weiser hinted to the crowd that he was just as stunned by Trump's victory as they were.

"To paint a broad brush thing, because you're Republican, you must believe everything that Donald Trump did or said I think isn't a right conclusion," Weiser said.

But what Weiser didn't mention during that event was his repeated financial support for the Trump campaign and the larger Republican ticket during the 2016 election. Weiser's contributions to Republican campaign funds after Trump clinched the Party's nomination exceeded \$363,000.

Weiser even served as one of the campaign victory fund's six chairpersons. Though he was fearful then of publicly associating with Trump's Republican Party at a University of Michigan event, Weiser was very much a member of Trump's 2016 campaign.



Ron Weiser with President Trump, May 2017. Photo credit: Shealah Craighead, White House. Edited by Sammy Sussman.

xenophobia [and] Islamophobia." (Weiser explained in a phone call that this was not his definition but was merely the definition he found after searching "Trumpism" on his cell phone.)

Over the past four years, Weiser's many connections to Trump's Republican Party — particularly the main purveyors of the "Trumpism" Weiser claimed to disavow the morning after the election — have become all the more explicit.

In January 2017, as the Trump administration prepared to move into the White House, Weiser ran for a second term as chair of the Michigan Republican Party. He received an endorsement letter from then-White House chief of staff Reince Priebus and then-White House chief strategist Steve Bannon. "Ron's dedication for improving the lives of all Americans accords with our President-elect's goals," Priebus and Bannon wrote, "and he is the right man to grow the Republican Party in Michigan."

Weiser explained in a phone call that he accepted the Priebus-Bannon nomination because he wanted to win the election. "When you're running for an office, you take whatever

see WEISER page 9 ➤



National revitalization efforts inform local proposals

OLIVIA LOCKHART, REAGAN RECCHIA AND MORRISON SCHMIDT
U-M student contributors

Access to safe and affordable housing has been an issue that has long plagued the United States, yet Ann Arbor itself tends to be thought of as a "wealthy city." With a nationally ranked university and an average household income of almost six figures, how can one not look at Ann Arbor as a booming hub of success and wealth? Despite this assumption, Ann Arbor has a real housing problem with staggeringly increasing rent rates and an underserved homeless population.

Government officials have aimed to fix this problem for years. Specifically, 10 years ago, a plan was proposed by the Obama administration called "PETRA." There were massive Ann Arbor citizen concerns. Ann Arbor citizens are now embarking on an action plan of their own, starting with the passage of Proposal C — the Ann Arbor Affordable Housing millage in November of 2020.

Very low-income American families rely on housing assistance to survive. According to the National Housing Law Project, a nonprofit organization committed to housing justice, in 2010, there were "1.2 million public housing units that serve vulnerable families..." in the United States, most of those being low-income families. This is a huge group of citizens that we need to protect. Yet from 1995-2010, the United States lost public housing stock at an alarming rate. We were also facing an economic downturn and billions of dollars worth of unmet capital needs.

In 2010, then-President Barack Obama decided change was needed in the public/private housing situation. Obama and the Department of Housing and Urban Development proposed "PETRA," or the Preservation, Enhancement and Transformation of Rental Assistance Act, a \$350 million plan to preserve and improve public housing. PETRA did not mandate the program, but the Department of Housing and Urban Development assumed there would be many participants.

Despite the obvious need for serious change, this proposal did not make citizens happy, including those in Ann Arbor. In the article titled "Revitalize to privatize? Critics say Obama's public housing plan needs rewiring," published in the Seattle street paper Real Change, writer Cydney Gillis summarized citizens' fears that public housing authorities would mortgage and take out private loans on public property. Many people were also concerned because these public housing authorities would have the ability to leverage billions in additional private investments. Another major concern from residents was that

rent levels would rise above market rates. We are now 10 years beyond 2010 and able to see if some of their predictions about PETRA were correct.

Tenant concerns surrounding PETRA were temporarily alleviated, as Congress never formally introduced PETRA. Edits and program changes to PETRA continued throughout the latter half of 2010. The original version of PETRA became the Rental Housing Revitalization Act (FY12) that was introduced in the House of Representatives in December by Democratic Representative Keith Ellison of Minnesota.

The final iteration of the Rental Housing Revitalization Act included numerous critical adaptations to the earliest PETRA bill. Firstly, and most notably, the PETRA bill initially requested \$350 million for revitalization efforts and an additional \$50 million for "services to promote resident mobility." The final Rental Housing Revitalization Act omitted this additional funding to decrease the bill's potential expenditure. The number of revitalized units dropped in the Rental Housing Revitalization Act from 300,000 units to 263,000 units. Such changes were made to correct perceived overconfidence in the number of housing units that could be realistically updated.

The Rental Housing Revitalization Act was never passed by Congress. Attempts at national revitalization under the Obama Administration did not stop at the Rental Housing Revitalization Act. The Neighborhood Revitalization Initiative of 2010 permitted local governments to integrate funds from various departments and capitalize on NRI grants to improve living standards and opportunities in public and private low-income neighborhoods and areas.

Unfortunately, the integration of many agencies and subcommittees did not alleviate housing distress in many of the communities it aimed to help. A 2016 report, Revitalizing Neighborhoods: The Federal Role, noted that "Congressional inaction played some part in the lack of progress."

Many anxieties surrounding privatization of public housing, increasing rental rates and safety still remain. Despite its legislative shortcomings, the NRI did bring to light the multifaceted issues that those with housing uncertainty face and bolstered public and federal departmental support for "local solutions to revitalize and transform neighborhoods." Ann Arbor's evaluation of city-owned properties as affordable housing sites and passage of the millage for a steady, 20-year funding stream are local solutions to mitigating the housing burden of their low-income residents. Unlike PETRA's previous attempt at a 30-year "use agreement" that would result in mass sell-offs once they expire, the revenue from Ann Arbor City Proposal C will go toward

construction, maintenance and acquisition of new permanent affordable housing units for people making up to 60% of the area median income, with 20% funding social services for tenants.

There was a major question brought up among the City Council in a special meeting broadcast on July 27 as to whether affordable housing could be built in flood zones. After much discussion, the Council decided to prohibit the spending of City money on providing affordable housing in floodways or floodplains. Council member Ali Ramlawi provided some reasoning behind their decision. According to an MLive article about Ann Arbor Proposal C, Ramlawi believed that "it wasn't right to put vulnerable residents in high-risk areas."

Some members of the City Council were concerned about potential negative outcomes from the Prop C millage. City Council member Jack Eaton addressed the possibility that the tax increase could cause trouble for other working-class citizens by pricing them out of Ann Arbor. On the other hand, multiple Council members remained optimistic that the proposal, along with

94% of commuters in Ann Arbor's workforce who prefer to live in Ann Arbor commute because they cannot afford local housing.

22% of Ann Arbor's greenhouse gas emissions are from Transportation. A reduction in vehicle miles travel & daily commute is required to meet emission reduction goals

Affordable housing is essential for the community and the environment. Unaffordable housing near large employment regions like Ann Arbor pushes commuters away from the city which increase transportation emissions through higher commute times and longer traffic congestions. This millage is a start to ensuring low income residents have local housing options which is a necessity for meeting climate goals.

Support Climate by Voting for Affordable Housing

future teamwork among the council to make other difficult decisions, will benefit the community. As stated in the MLive article posted on July 28, 2020, Council member Julie Grand addressed Eaton's concerns by describing the tax as "just one piece in a complex puzzle." When first introduced to Proposal C and what it aims to accomplish, University of Michigan freshman Zach Betron provided his thoughts on how the proposal could benefit the city as a whole by saying that "the opportunity for low-income residents to shrink the gap between social classes in the city of Ann Arbor would be the most valuable outcome." Betron's words illuminate the ways that the proposal will help bring more balance to the community in terms of the range of people who live and work here.

Proposal C has the opportunity to prove itself to be more effective than PETRA's original 2010 plan despite the fact that it is being introduced on the local level. That 75% of the voters approved the millage, speaks volumes on how committed the people of Ann Arbor are to maintaining a diverse community whose basic needs are met.

Through a spreadsheet obtained under the Freedom of Information Act, I've also been able to confirm that McKinley Associates received a \$5 to \$10 million loan through the Paycheck Protection Program. On the phone, Weiser at first denied that he maintained any interest in McKinley. He then insisted that the money was used to continue paying McKinley's employees and to cover the increases in rent discounts that McKinley was providing to residents of its buildings.

While the perception around campus is that a conflict of interest remains, multiple sources with the University's donation process confirmed that no such conflict exists. These sources confirmed that this donation was being developed for a year prior to its announcement and McKinley's property portfolio, while vast, includes few student apartments. "I had no influence on what that decision was," Weiser said a few months ago in an interview with Inside Higher Ed. "It stunk worse than you do," he said in an interview earlier this week.

Weiser also took issue with my use of the word "alleged" when describing the previous reporting on an alleged conflict of interest. "You can say that I shit out of my mouth if you want and put it in the newspaper and say it's alleged," he said. "Weiser's alleged to shit out of his mouth."

But despite the thousands of dollars he donated to Trump's campaign, Weiser has often attempted to distance himself from Trump. At the 2016 event, Weiser took issue with being referred to as a "bigot" for supporting Trump during the post-election event. "I quite frankly find it offensive that people think I'm bigoted because I voted for somebody who has certain principles — economic principles and other principles — that I happen to agree with," Weiser said.

Weiser and the investment company he founded

► WEISER from page 7

endorsements you can get in order to win," he explained. "I'm not going to say Steve Bannon's an asshole, because it helped me get votes."

Ten days before he officially became the next Chair of the Michigan Republican Party, Weiser donated \$125,000 to the Republican National Committee.

The Republican Party's 2018 tax cut package, after all, was heralded in the media as a "\$1.5 trillion tax cut." When asked if he benefited from this bill, Weiser claimed that he hasn't. "No, I have not. Not a penny; not a cent," he said. "I don't even get to take advantage of the charitable contributions because of my unique tax situation." (Weiser later declined to elaborate on this "unique" situation.)

Earlier that month, Weiser had donated \$200,000 to the Republican-affiliated super PAC America First Action, Inc.

In the middle of the panel discussion the day after the election, Weiser tried to reassure the audience that he viewed his role on the Board of Regents as essentially non-partisan. (Weiser was elected to the position through a statewide vote down-ballot of Trump.) "It's not a political position," Weiser said at the time, "I don't believe in [the University of Michigan's mission] any differently than you do or any of the Democrats do."

But as his move into Trump's Republican Party became increasingly public, his position led to public controversy.

The first controversy was over Weiser's \$50,000 donation to The MRP Legal Expense Trust Fund, a defense fund established to cover Vice President Pence's legal costs as incurred during the Mueller investigation. (This donation was first reported in June by The Washington Post.)

Later that month, Weiser's role as a Board of Regents member in encouraging the University of Michigan to re-open was criticized due to an alleged conflict of interest given McKinley's ownership of many Ann Arbor apartment buildings. It was also noted by some that Weiser's \$30 million donation to the University was announced weeks before the reopening decision was announced.

This past fall, Weiser was enveloped in a fresh donation-related controversy. He had donated \$100,000 to Unlock Michigan, an effort to curb Governor Whitmer's use of her emergency powers in addressing the COVID-19 pandemic. (An investigation by the state Attorney General was later announced against Unlock Michigan for its alleged illegal attempts to obtain petitioner signatures.) "I know nothing about the investigation. I [know] nothing about Unlock Michigan," Weiser wrote in an email to The Michigan Daily after the investigation was announced. "I made the contribution because of who asked me."

Back in 2014, when Weiser donated \$25 million to the University of Michigan to start the Weiser Center for Emerging Democracies, he explained the importance of supporting the development of democracy abroad. "When I was working with the Slovaks, I realized there are no books written, no roadmap, for a country to transition from an authoritarian government to a free society," Weiser said. "We're talking about people having the opportunity to come out from under the thumb of authoritarian rule, and with that freedom to have a better life for themselves and their children, as well as freedom from fear of their government, their police, and even their neighbors."

But as the Trump administration's baseless claims of widespread voter fraud continue to

have profited tremendously from the Trump administration's economic conservatism. (Weiser claims that he is no longer affiliated with McKinley Companies though he was their founder and remains on their website. He further claims that he has not benefited at all from Trump-era tax policies.)

Though Weiser once appeared in multiple photographs with Vice President Pence — over the phone, Weiser described Pence as a "friend" — Weiser disavowed Trump's legal challenges in an email.

And when it comes to Trumpism, Weiser now bristles at the definition he read only four years ago of the movement he then renounced. "I still disavow [Trumpism] but I don't believe I ever gave it a definition. I think it's (your definition) and not mine," Weiser wrote in a later email.

Editors note: Mr. Weiser's response to this article is as follows: "I'm proud of my relationship with the University of Michigan, and am pleased that my and my wife's contributions over the years have helped them achieve their goals in a variety of important areas. To imply that those gifts were made for personal gain is false and insulting, and diminishes the work being accomplished."

Our Statement of Solidarity with Black Lives Matter

From its inception, Groundcover News has approached all its activities with belief in the following principles, as written on our website:

- All people have the right to dignity.
- Diversity has intrinsic value.
- Poverty is political — systemic change is necessary.
- Building community is essential to social change.
- Political effectiveness requires staying power.
- Solutions to poverty must involve people who are directly affected.
- Risks are necessary to create positive change.
- Meeting people where they are honors their skills and potential.
- We are committed to quality, professionalism, and accountability in everything we do.

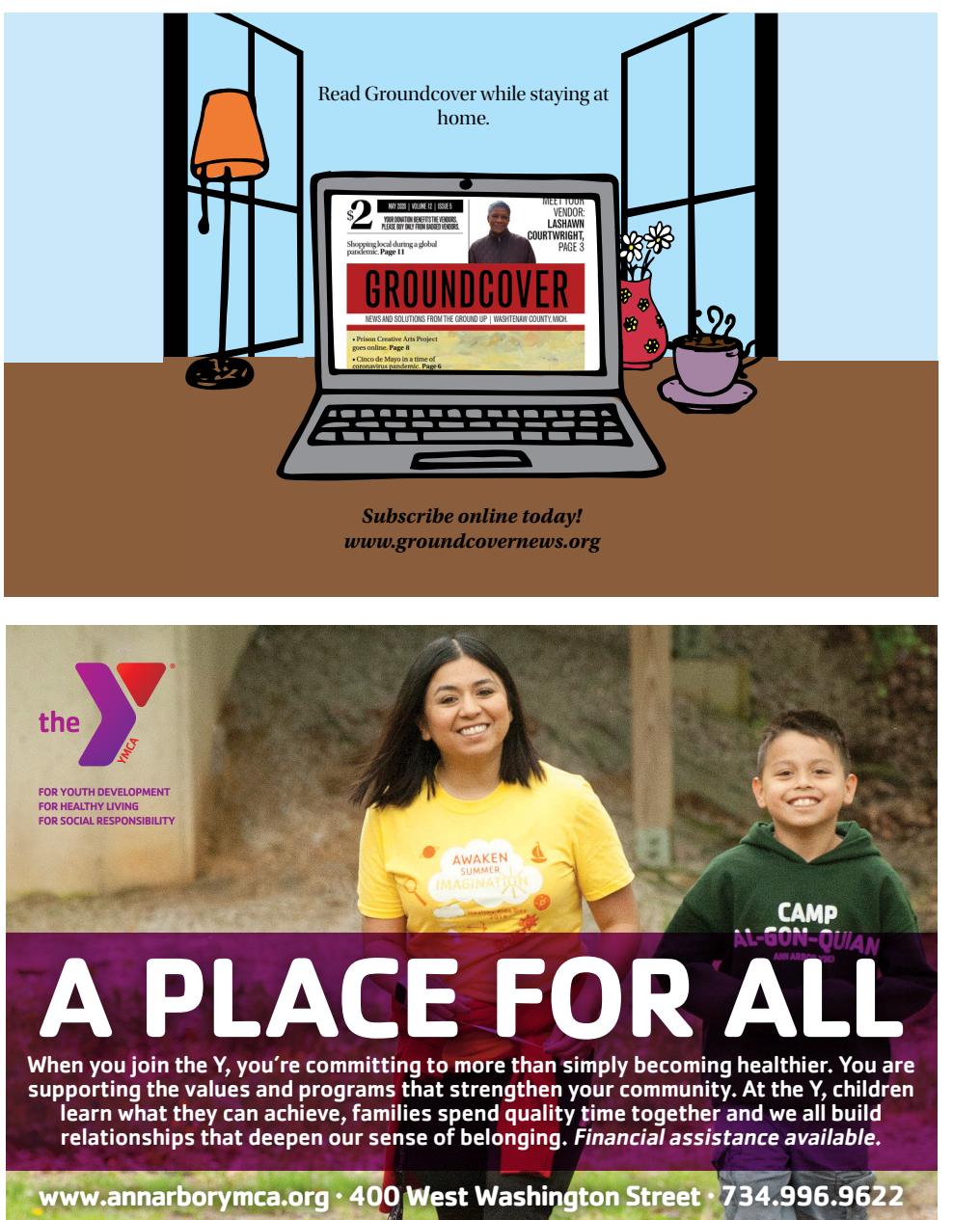
We feel our attachment to these principles even more strongly today. If they resonate with you too, and you are looking for a way to make a difference during these life-changing times, please join us as a volunteer, supporter, friend or Board Member. To let us know, email: contact@groundcovernews.com.



Groundcover Vendor Code during COVID-19

While Groundcover is a non-profit, and paper vendors are self-employed contractors, we still have expectations of how vendors should conduct themselves while selling and representing the paper. The following is our **Vendor Code of Conduct**, which every vendor reads and signs before receiving a badge and papers. We request that if you discover a vendor violating any tenets of the Code, please contact us and provide as many details as possible. Our paper and our vendors should be positively impacting our County.

- I will not sell Groundcover under the influence of drugs or alcohol.
- I understand that I am not a legal employee of Groundcover but a contracted worker responsible for my own well-being and income.
- I understand that my badge is property of Groundcover and will not deface it. I will present my badge when purchasing the papers.
- I agree to stay off private property when selling Groundcover.
- I understand to refrain from selling on public buses, federal property or stores unless there is permission from the owner.
- I agree to stay at least one block away from another vendor in downtown areas. I will also abide by the Vendor Corner Policy.
- I understand that Groundcover strives to be a paper that covers topics of homelessness and poverty while providing sources of income for the homeless. I will try to help in this effort and spread the word.
- I will wear a mask at all times while selling Groundcover News.
- I will use gloves, hand sanitizer or wash with soap to remove germs from my hands before selling and as needed.
- I will stay 6 feet away from others.
- I agree to treat all customers, staff



Is COVID-19 making it hard to make ends meet?

If you're struggling to keep up with rent, mortgage, or utilities payments, or need help paying for food, childcare, or gas for your car the **Barrier Buster Network** is here to support you.



Visit Washtenaw.org/2818 or contact one of these Barrier Busters agencies to help you pay your bills as soon as possible:

Housing Access for Washtenaw County

Phone: 734.961.1999

Website: housingaccess.net**SOS Community Services**

Phone: 734.484.5411

Website: www.soscs.org**Washtenaw Health Plan**

Phone: 734.544.3030

Website: www.washtenaw.org/WHP**Jewish Family Services**

Phone: 734.769.0209

Website: jfsann Arbor.org**Sudoku** ★★★★ 4puz.com

9	1						7	
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				2			4	
5		1			8	2		
8							9	
		6	4		3		8	
2				7				
3				4	9	1	2	
		7				9	6	

Fill in the squares so that each row, column, and 3-by-3 box contain the numbers 1 through 9.

► **BRANDON** from page 6

caseworker), his friend Tony Adams who he met at Delonis, and the older gentlemen at Delonis who have counseled him.

"You have to be a good person to have others pay attention to you," Williams philosophized.

Magnus the Entertainer will dance anywhere. He brings joy to people. The Magnus persona was launched on Williams' 30th birthday in July of 2019. He was picked up by Kim Myers, a talent scout for Arts International who places clients with Netflix, Nickelodeon and Tyler Perry Studios.

Myers admired Williams' clothes and styling. She encouraged him to add creative runway modeling to his professional life. She arranged auditions at Western for a blonde ballet dancer — a description that uncoincidentally fit Williams/Magnus perfectly. Out of 500 hopefuls, Williams was the only performer from Michigan to make the group of 16 potential contestants selected from the eastern United States.

Williams was subsequently invited to audition for America's Got Talent. He went to L.A. for the audition and made the cut. He stayed there, waiting for the next round. He went to hundreds of auditions and struggled to survive as COVID-19 settled in. When he could no longer pay for a room at the Sheraton Suites, he slept in their parking garage for a few weeks. He wrapped himself in plastic on the nights before auditions to keep his clothing clean. Then the COVID-19

outbreak in L.A. worsened and everything closed down. Season 15 of America's Got Talent was cancelled.

Donations to Magnus the Entertainer allowed Williams to acquire necessities like food and masks for himself and others he met who were sleeping rough. In late May, a fan saw the toll this lifestyle was taking on him and sent him a train ticket, travel money and encouragement to return to Michigan. Williams arrived at the Delonis Center on May 30 to greet old friends and was immediately taken in and placed at the Red Roof Inn.

He used that time to redefine his vision for himself. He reflected on how unprepared he had been, the mistakes he had made and how the lack of options had contributed to them. He resolved to use his experiences and talents to help the next generation of young artists avoid pitfalls.

"It's not about what you walk away from," said Williams, "it's what you walk away with."

He is making sure that his experience with tragedy does not go to waste. Since his return to Michigan, Williams founded his own non-profit, Forgotten Artists Incorporated. He is establishing a center for youth art, everything from dance and performance art to clothing design to provide at-risk youth with better options.

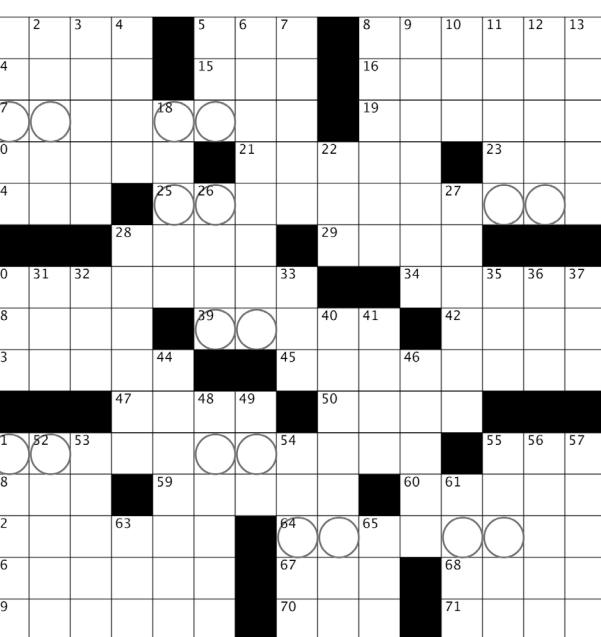
"It only makes sense that my struggle helps someone else. It's no longer about me. I want to grant opportunities for people to shine. We can fill your void with something you love

ACROSS

- Many an email offer
- Big event at the N.Y.S.E.
- Appropriates
- "Approximately"
- Cub Scout collective
- Bourbon, in New Orleans, for one
- Where life is lived, in an English song
- Coatroom accessory
- Classic violin
- Gut feeling?
- One-time connector
- Dash abbr.
- Light absorption property of physics
- Cutting comment
- European capital
- Political debate topic
- School paper
- In a frenzy
- Some nativity scene figures
- Formulate, as a question
- Crystal clear
- Super Bowl XLVIII winners
- Tidy
- South ___ (U of M dorm)
- Blue gemstone
- Wash. neighbor
- Shadowy area
- 16 ozs.
- Arena attendants
- Surprise
- Coffee container
- Psychedelic desk decoration
- Befitting a monarch
- Clever comeback
- Western tribe
- Green-light
- Balance sheet list
- Bashful
- Brand name kitchen scrubber
- Bill & ___ Excellent Adventure"

DOWN

- Until now
- Marathoner's woe
- Indian state known for its tea and silk
- de mer (seasickness)
- Ypsilanti sch.
- Bashful coworker?
- Malcolm, without the middle?



- Pen pal?
- Formulate, as a question
- Vote of support
- Hand down
- King succeeded by David
- Cake, maybe
- Israeli seaport
- Police heads-ups
- Social media identifier
- Zodiac sign
- Zodiac sign
- Fiery part of a fibber?
- Some South Africans
- "One Dance" rapper
- "That makes my head explode!"
- TV sports awards
- To a large extent
- One passing the buck, perhaps
- Oy__!

more than anything," Williams said.

With his social security savings, he established an office in Kent County in July and moved out of the shelter system. He pitched his ideas widely and found a collaborator who introduced him to some of the local kids who were pursuing the arts and gymnastics. They provided a French horn for one youngster, tap shoes for others. Williams also plans to use the arts for learning traditional subjects, such as memorizing math facts through dance steps and music.

Williams has been inspired by the clothing of other artists and wants to inspire and empower others to overcome their circumstances. He designs outfits adapted to modest beginnings. For example, his shoes accommodate dancing on pavement and extra-long t-shirts cover the backsides of bending dancers. He intends to give these items to the young artists in his program. He teaches the youngsters how the world can be their stage and how to safely enter the professional world.

William's programs are largely online for now, starting with a virtual dance group in which all dancers perform and stream individually. They are displayed together with a green screen background that makes it look like they are dancing together.



Magic bars

ELIZABETH BAUMAN
Groundcover contributor

Ingredients:

½ cup butter
1 ½ cups graham cracker crumbs
1 (14 oz.) can sweetened condensed milk
1 (12 oz.) package semisweet chocolate morsels
1 1/3 cups flaked coconut
1 cup chopped walnuts



Directions:

Preheat oven to 350 degrees (325 for glass). In 13 x 9" baking pan, melt butter in oven. Sprinkle crumbs over butter then pour sweetened condensed milk over crumbs. Layer evenly with remaining ingredients

and press down firmly. Bake for 25 minutes until lightly browned. Cool, chill if desired. Cut into bars.

A delicious, holiday treat!

World below

RONALD PAGERSKI
Groundcover contributor

Large bird on high so free, looks down on world below
to find and land on worthy tree, far above humanities woe.
He sees the turmoil on the ground, those who are lost
and never found. He sees the hate and the hurt that men bestow
on neighbor, brother, the homeless so low. The bird sees the greed
in each man's face, and chooses to shun the human race.
Best to avoid humanity's crowd, he'll stay at peace amid the cloud.
He's just a bird with brain so small, and yet he soars,
far above us all.

Bethlehem United Church of Christ

whoever you are, and wherever you are on life's journey, you are welcome here
423 S. Fourth Avenue, Ann Arbor, MI 48104 734-665-6149
Bethlehem-ucc.org facebook.com/bethlehemuccA2

Bethlehem Church is home of the Groundcover office



DECEMBER 2020 EVENTS AT BETHLEHEM

Bethlehem has cancelled all in-person activities due to COVID-19.
Here are ways you can experience our 10 am worship service on Sundays:

Most Simple - Tune in to our live radio broadcast on WAAM 1600AM.
You can also listen to WAAM on Tune In by following this link : <http://www.mainstreamnetwork.com/listen/player.asp?station=waam-am&listen=Listen+Live>.
(Click the shiny "play" button on the lower left of the page, ignoring any advertisements.)
• Facebook
Beginning at 9:55 Sunday, you will find our Live Video at Bethlehem's Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/bethlehemuccA2>

Following the 10 am service on Sunday, the video will be posted to the Bethlehem UCC website: www.bethlehem-ucc.org. We have begun posting the service to [Bethlehem's YouTube page](#), it will be available there at 10 am on Sundays.

Thank you all. We look forward to worshiping together.



[Sunday Worship Times](#)
10:00 am Sanctuary
streamed on Facebook

PUZZLE SOLUTIONS



9	1	2	6	8	4	5	7	3
4	5	8	3	9	7	6	2	1
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S	C	A	M	I	P	O	U	S	U	R	P	S
14	O	R	S	O	D	E	N	16	S	T	R	E
17	F	A	S	T	L	A	N	E	H	A	G	E
20	A	M	A	T	I	U	L	C	E	R	23	A
24	R	P	M		25	L	A	M	B	E	T	S
30	M	E	D	I	C	A	R	E		E	35	37
38	A	M	O	K		L	A	M	B	S	42	P
43	L	U	C	I	D		S	E	A	H	46	W
58	I	R	A		N	E	A	T	Q	U	47	D
62	B	I	N	D	E	R		L	A	V	60	61
66	R	E	T	O	R	T	62	63	64	65	66	68
69	A	S	S	E	T	S	70	71	72	73	74	75
	S	H	Y									



**St. Francis
Christmas Services**

ALL are invited to watch services online:

Spanish: stfrancisa2.com/misa
English: stfrancisa2.com/mass

Regular Mass Times

Mon-Fri 9:15am

Saturday 5pm

7pm (Spanish)

Sunday 8:30am, 10:30am, 12:30pm

The **Christmas service** schedule and details are online at www.stfrancisa2.com

During the LiveStream mass, make a spiritual communion by praying this or a similar prayer:

My Jesus, I believe that You are present in the Most Holy Sacrament. I love You above all things, and I desire to receive You into my soul. Since I cannot at this moment receive You sacramentally, come at least spiritually into my heart. I embrace You as if You were already there and unite myself wholly to You. Never permit me to be separated from You. Amen.



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12/31/2020